United Nations A/C.2/62/SR.24

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
14 December 2007

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 November 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. Santizo-Sandoval ..... (Guatemala)
later: Mr. Saleh (Vice-Chairperson). ..... (Lebanon)

Contents

Agenda item 58: Eradication of poverty and other development issues (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) (*continued*)

(b) Women in development (*continued*)

(c) Human resources development (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

07-58340 (E)

In the absence of Ms. Lintonen (Finland), Ms. Santizo-Sandoval (Guatemala), Vice-Chairperson, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 58: Eradication of poverty and other development issues (*continued*) (A/62/155, A/62/371, A/62/372, A/62/486 and A/62/488)

(a) Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) (*continued*) (A/62/211, A/62/267 and A/62/483-E/2007/90)

(b) Women in development (*continued*) (A/62/187)

(c) Human resources development (*continued*) (A/62/308)

1. **Mr. Shameem** (Suriname), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that progress in the eradication of poverty was uneven and slow, marked by economic disparities, unequal trade regimes, income inequalities between and within countries, social injustice and declining opportunities for millions of people. It was therefore imperative to address the patterns of international finance, trade, technology and investment that affected the developing countries' development prospects.

2. The eradication of poverty and hunger was central to the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and required action by all stakeholders. It necessitated renewed international attention to coherence in development and to trade and finance policies for averting the erosion of development gains and the exacerbation of poverty. It also entailed good governance and transparency in financial, monetary and trading systems.

3. CARICOM faced four major challenges in its endeavours to halve the numbers of the poor by 2015: a strengthened and restructured economy creating a dynamic private sector that could generate growth and jobs, while taking the challenges of globalization and free trade into account; consolidated regional, national, State and non-State capacities to define, implement and monitor poverty eradication policies; upgraded labour-market training institutions; and strengthened social sector policies for protecting the poor and underprivileged. He urged donor countries to continue to assign priority to poverty eradication in their assistance programmes, with due consideration for national priorities, and highlighted the need for integrated, coherent implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of all major United Nations development conferences and agreements.

4. While acknowledging countries' primary responsibility for their development, in view of the commitment undertaken at the International Conference on Financing for Development to establish a global partnership, he called on the international community to make a strong political commitment to strengthen that partnership. With a few exceptions, the developed countries had yet to meet their ODA commitments. There had even been a significant decline in ODA, which had affected CARICOM, a region of small and vulnerable economies. He called on developed countries that had not yet done so to establish a timetable for the expeditious achievement of the 0.7 per cent ODA target.

5. **Mr. Alim** (Bangladesh) said that although the developing countries had undertaken significant reform measures for poverty eradication, as well as measures for enhancing mobilization of domestic resources, national efforts alone could not succeed without commensurate global support. There had been a decline in ODA levels, debt relief alone could not release sufficient resources, and the international trade regime was far from optimal. Poverty still posed an enormous threat, as did inequality, with globalization increasing concentrations of income and wealth. The recent growth spurt experienced by some least developed countries was extremely fragile, depending as it did on high commodity prices and, on occasion, extensive FDI for exploiting natural resources.

6. The creation of decent, productive employment was vital to poverty reduction, but global performance in that regard had been disappointing. Although microcredit programmes contributed to asset creation, job generation, economic security and empowerment of the poor, especially women, some 500 million poor and low-income people worldwide still had no access to such loans. One important achievement of the first Decade for the Eradication of Poverty had been a better understanding of the deep-rooted obstacles that countries faced in their poverty-reduction efforts. Poverty eradication and prosperity were the duty and treasured dream of humankind in its pursuit of justice and equality. Bangladesh appealed to Member States to proclaim a second Decade to give new impetus to

attainment of the common goal of a world free from fear, want and deprivation.

7. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said that poverty was still the greatest injustice befalling nations around the world, especially in developing countries as they came to grips with an increasingly globalized economy. Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals had been uneven because the international economic environment had not always been favourable to developing countries. Despite their sustained efforts to mobilize domestic resources, fair trade, increased ODA, additional debt relief and FDI flows, and a non-discriminatory financial system remained mere promises. Even with its remarkable economic growth, the Asia-Pacific region was no exception.

8. Given the imperative need for a genuine and balanced global partnership, her delegation welcomed the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha in 2008. Indonesia would play an active role in identifying measures for further implementation as well as new challenges and emerging issues. Vital though the Millennium Development Goals were, development cooperation must continue beyond 2015.

9. Despite the burdens of past financial crises, her country was on track to achieve the Goals, having democratized and strengthened its economy following the Asian financial crisis. Its development strategy underscored pro-growth, pro-poor and pro-job approaches and her Government continued to do its utmost to balance the requirements of growth promotion and improved welfare distribution. A top priority was to improve access to finance for low-income enterprises and households. Indonesia still had high unemployment rates and inadequate education and health facilities. International cooperation was therefore needed to support national efforts. In conclusion, she urged the international community to fulfil its promises.

10. **Ms. Sahussarungsi** (Thailand) said that without immediate action the vicious cycle of extreme poverty and inequality would continue for generations, disempowering and marginalizing the poor. States must implement strategies to eliminate poverty and destitution, which required the support of all stakeholders. What was required was an integrated, holistic approach that addressed all dimensions of poverty, especially national capacity-building. Mobilization of domestic resources would not suffice; the developed countries must therefore honour their commitments, particularly with regard to ODA and the poverty challenges in middle-income developing countries. Developing countries, for their part, must abide by their own commitments to implement national policies, including sound economic policies, in a transparent manner.

11. International trade was a driving force for poverty reduction, and developing countries must be given the opportunity to trade themselves out of poverty. Her delegation appealed for a swift conclusion of the Doha Round. Her country had made great strides towards poverty reduction in the previous eight years and had attained the first target of Millennium Development Goal 1 as early as 2004. It aimed to reduce the number of people living in poverty to below 4 per cent by 2009, in particular through the empowerment of women. Thailand's Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy incorporated universal values relating to day-to-day relations and aimed at withstanding external economic turbulence and promoting sustainable development. The primary indicator of overall development was no longer GDP alone but also poverty reduction and social equality.

12. Poverty eradication required collective efforts. South-South cooperation, as a complement to North-South cooperation, had attracted more attention, and the lessons learned could be shared, particularly at the United Nations, in order to contribute to global poverty-reduction efforts. The time had come to honour commitments to help lift out of poverty those who could not help themselves.

13. **Mr. Liu** Yuyin (China) observed that poverty eradication had become an overarching theme of all global conferences and an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind. While there had been some progress towards poverty eradication at the global level, millions worldwide were still living in poverty. The sub-Saharan African countries were finding it particularly hard to meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015. The fight against poverty should not stop with the end of the first Decade for the Eradication of Poverty; rather, the international community should redouble its efforts and build on the Decade's achievements.

14. Economic growth was essential as the supplier of power and resources necessary for poverty eradication. Economic development should be the first priority for

developing countries. The poverty-affected population must be given access to resources and opportunities that would enable them to escape from poverty through their own efforts. A harmonious and united society was an essential safeguard; enterprises, civil society organizations, women and youth should be mobilized to use poverty eradication as a tool to promote social justice and equality. Vigorous international cooperation was an important factor.

15. All parties should honour their commitments under the Millennium Development Goals and the Monterrey Consensus. The developing countries should promote self-reliance, giving free rein to their peoples' wisdom, talent and creativity, while the developed countries must provide funding and other forms of assistance to developing countries in support of poverty eradication strategies. International organizations should take concrete measures to contribute to those efforts.

16. His Government had mobilized all forces of society for the development of poverty-stricken areas. The poorest population groups were encouraged and helped to cast off the shackles of underdevelopment through hard work and self-reliance. At the same time, the Government had adopted a holistic approach to poverty eradication by linking the development of natural resources to that of human resources, and poverty reduction and development to environmental protection. Progress in that area had been substantial: the rural population living in absolute poverty had declined from 250 million in 1978 to 21.48 million in 2006, and the low-income population had been reduced from 62.13 million in 2000 to 35.5 million in 2006. His country had thus reached the Millennium Development Goals target of halving poverty ahead of time.

17. China had also played a prominent part in international poverty-reduction activities. It had promoted South-South cooperation and increased development assistance to other developing countries, in particular through the China Poverty Reduction and Regional Cooperation Fund and the International Poverty Reduction Centre in Beijing, which provided training and research facilities for officials from numerous countries who worked on international poverty eradication. The Chinese authorities had also organized seven international conferences to exchange experience on poverty eradication.

18. **Mr. Vundavalli** (India) said that poverty eradication was the central development priority of developing countries and that significant challenges in that regard would persist even after the Millennium Development Goals had been achieved.

19. The factors critical for progress towards poverty eradication included employment generation; adequate new and additional financing from the international community in support of developing countries' efforts; sustained, pro-poor and inclusive economic growth; sufficient policy space within which developing countries could formulate and implement their own development strategies; and an enabling international economic environment for aid, enhanced market access and technology transfers. There was an urgent need to reform the international financial architecture, under United Nations oversight. Greater flexibility was needed to ensure the primacy of the development dimension.

20. Governments must incorporate gender perspectives when formulating and implementing national development strategies. Additional support from the international community was required to facilitate such efforts in the developing countries. India was actively implementing the commitments undertaken in the Beijing Platform for Action. He described actions his Government was taking to promote entrepreneurship among women and their participation in government decision-making.

21. Although developing countries possessed considerable manpower, human resources development was essential if that human capital was to be utilized effectively to enhance economic output. Investment was therefore essential in, inter alia, health and nutrition, education and vocational training. Drawing attention to the experience of his own country, he underscored the value of information and communication technology, including distance learning, in building a skilled workforce, competitiveness and productivity and, consequently, development.

22. Developing countries often lacked the resources required to establish scientific and technical training institutions. He called on the international community to provide financial resources and technical assistance to developing countries for capacity-building, effective technology transfers, collaborative research and development, and the establishment of advanced technical training institutions.

23. **Mr. Hannesson** (Iceland) said that the advancement of women was a fundamental human rights issue and a precondition for successful achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Women and men should enjoy equal representation in all walks of life.

24. Given the strong links between women's empowerment and poverty reduction, Iceland's development cooperation had increasingly been directed at enhancing the role of women in the developing countries. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was a key partner in those efforts and his country had decided to double its current contribution to the Fund.

25. The Icelandic International Development Agency was supporting equal rights for women in a number of countries and Iceland would reflect that interest in its bilateral and multilateral cooperation and assistance for post-conflict reconstruction. In order to strengthen the participation of women in decision-making, the Agency supported training and education of women, focusing on adult literacy in Africa and education for girls. It also supported basic health care for women, particularly reproductive health. For example, it was financing the construction in Namibia and Nicaragua of facilities that provided free services to pregnant women from rural areas who did not have direct access to health services. In its work with international organizations, Iceland placed considerable emphasis on assisting women in war-torn societies. Women also played a key role in post-conflict reconstruction and, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), his country had emphasized the role of women in its peacebuilding operations.

26. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that poverty in her country had decreased by 10 per cent during the period 2002-2006. Although sustained economic growth had contributed to the decline, the decisive factor had been the implementation by the Government of a social agenda more ambitious than the Millennium Development Goals. The agenda marshalled substantial national resources in support of policies addressing critical social sectors, including education, employment, social security, access to ownership, social management of public services and quality of life in cities. A national development plan for the period 2006-2010 would ensure the continuity of those policies and broaden their reach. The plan would focus on combating poverty and inequality and would give preferential treatment to the poorest and most vulnerable members of the population. In addition, there was a special initiative to combat extreme poverty by extending comprehensive and coordinated social services to the poorest households.

27. The continued success of national poverty eradication efforts in the developing countries also required the full implementation by the international community of the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. In that connection, she emphasized the importance of reaching the agreed ODA target.

28. It was also essential to increase international support for the poverty eradication efforts of middle-income developing countries and advance the global partnership for development, as called for in Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals. She also underscored the need for a more stable and predictable international financial system, a more transparent and open trading system and full implementation of the Doha Development Agenda. Her delegation strongly supported the proclamation of a second United Nations decade for the eradication of poverty.

29. **Mr. Al-Asmakh** (Qatar) said that, despite the progress achieved in international cooperation for development, the monumental problems of hunger, poverty and AIDS remained a challenge. Over half of the world's inhabitants, for instance, still lived on less than a dollar a day, the majority of them women. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women were important goals in their own right that were also instrumental to the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals. There was a need to refocus macroeconomic policies on the creation of full and productive employment opportunities for all, in particular decent paid work for women in the interests of ending poverty and gender discrimination. Indeed, gender equality was a policy advocated by economists, who also recognized the need to appraise the impact of macroeconomic policies on both men and women in the household. They further believed that yields and productivity would be boosted by women's equal access to production factors and agricultural inputs, as well as by satisfaction of their transport needs.

30. Development policies should be geared to helping the poor of both sexes, with the ultimate aim of ending

the macroeconomic fluctuations affecting women more than men and of tackling the inability of countries to cope with economic collapse. In times of financial crisis, women's employment and girls' education were the first to suffer. Rising inflation also had severe implications for low-income women in particular. Given the important role of women in the reduction of poverty and disease and in the achievement of sustainable development, investment in women and girls would further enhance the impact of gender equality on economic growth. Despite their potential as a driving force for economic change, however, women's contribution to socioeconomic development remained limited owing to such factors as their unequal access to technology and information. In short, more attention to gender mainstreaming in budgeting and in human-resources planning for development was essential to ensuring women's full participation in all walks of life and to guaranteeing their enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities.

31. **Mr. Ngor** (Sudan) said that efforts had been focused on the first Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, as a result of which economic growth rates had steadily risen. In the developing countries macroeconomic policies had incorporated pro-poor structural reforms and direct measures had been introduced to address the non-income-related dimensions of poverty. The proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day had consequently decreased in most of those countries, apart from those in Africa. Agricultural development was a major factor in poverty reduction, to which end a global partnership must support national efforts. In some cases ODA had increased, only to be channelled into debt relief. Real spending on development programmes consequently remained static at the level of the early 1990s.

32. In the Sudan, the three peace accords signed by his Government had initiated a new phase of development, while the findings of the Sudan Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) and the Darfur Joint Assessment Mission (D-JAM) would constitute a medium-term framework for development to complement the country's 25-year development strategy. Efforts were under way to ensure fair distribution of the benefits of the high economic growth achieved in recent years and to increase the allocation of resources to social development. A national poverty alleviation programme providing various forms of social support was also being implemented, together with projects for an agricultural revival aimed at improving the livelihoods of most Sudanese inhabitants. His Government had additionally established a strategic reserve for essential food needs, which was supplemented by donor aid and by alms tax (*zakat*) amounting to some US$ 12 million annually. Education was provided without charge for nomadic children, children with special needs and children from disadvantaged families. Emergency medical treatment in public hospitals was also free of charge.

33. The Sudan was currently developing a poverty alleviation strategy aimed at sustaining high growth and ensuring the fair distribution of its benefits. A new community development fund had also been established to provide microfinance and the national ownership of development ensured that priorities were respected, with attention to transparency and accountability of development partners. The Sudan's capacities for poverty alleviation were, however, limited by its heavy debt burden, amounting to some $27 billion. It therefore appealed to the international community to support its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those relating to poverty reduction, by enabling it to benefit from the debt relief initiatives currently in place. With particular reference to paragraph 75 of the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) (A/62/267), he said that the Sudan had obtained no debt relief or ODA since the mid-1990s owing to the unilateral economic embargo unjustly imposed on it in 1997. The second Decade should be launched with a view to enabling poor countries to implement the Millennium Development Goals in accordance with the set time frame.

34. *Mr. Saleh (Lebanon), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

35. **Mr. Heidt** (United States of America), citing World Bank statistics, said that over the preceding ten years economic growth had contributed significantly to declining poverty rates in all developing regions and at all income levels. Poverty eradication was the keystone on which all other internationally agreed development goals rested. However, progress towards poverty eradication had been uneven and additional efforts to that end were required. Although trade, investment and private financial flows were the primary drivers of poverty reduction, investment in human capital,

including that provided in the form of external assistance, was also needed.

36. The United States provided the most external assistance by a donor country and had increased its ODA by 100 per cent since 2002. It had also provided significant debt relief under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, contributed substantial funding to combat AIDS worldwide and provided grants to countries that demonstrated good governance practices and invested in their people, particularly women and children. A United States Government Initiative — the Millennium Challenge Corporation — had signed compacts totalling almost $4.8 billion with countries that performed better than their peers on indicators of good governance.

37. In order to create an enabling environment to sustain economic growth, it was necessary to remove barriers preventing people from realizing their potential; register property rights; enforce contracts; allow markets to be competitive; and help small and medium-sized enterprises grow and create jobs. Women must have the same education, employment and business opportunities as men. It was also essential to combat corruption, which adversely affected the poor in particular.

38. Successful development resulted from private-sector-led growth in a context of macroeconomic stability, good governance, investment in human capital and public-private partnership. Unless those conditions existed, a poor country receiving large amounts of external assistance would have difficulty reducing poverty.

39. **Ms. Toutkhalian** (Armenia) said that her Government's strategic plan for poverty reduction incorporated all the Millennium Development Goals. One important component was poverty reduction, with a goal of eliminating extreme poverty by 2015 and reducing poverty to 4.6 per cent. As some of the objectives set for 2009 had been met in 2005, that goal was realistic.

40. Poverty in Armenia had been reduced thanks to continued economic growth, a stable labour market and higher salaries, and higher allocations to the pension fund and other social subsidies over the past five years, combined with a steady flow of private transfers from abroad. Extreme poverty had been reduced by 2 per cent in the past two years and poverty by almost 5 per cent. Armenia also had the highest Human Development Index ranking in the region, although the Gini index showed that income disparity was still an acute problem. There was still much to be done to improve institutions and the availability of opportunities.

41. The Government gave priority to improving public health. Average infant and maternal mortality rates in Armenia were lower than in other States of the region. Mandatory and free vaccination of infants and schoolchildren, subsidized annual check-ups for women and free ambulatory and hospital care for senior citizens were bringing further health improvements. One pending issue was the provision of similar services for disabled persons. Elementary education was available to all children and access to at least middle-school education should be universal by 2015.

42. Rural development was high on the Government's agenda, with special attention to gender equality in access to financing and especially to microcredits, while a number of programmes focused on creating infrastructure, schools and hospitals in rural areas. Assistance from international organizations, bilateral cooperation and the Armenian diaspora had brought some successes. In 2005, Armenia had signed an agreement with the Millennium Challenge Corporation and was implementing an ambitious project to cover rural Armenia with a network of roads, modern infrastructure, schools and health-care facilities.

43. Effective governance, promotion and protection of human rights and significant investment in human capital by the Government would be a powerful impetus for international donors to assist Armenia further in its efforts to eradicate poverty.

44. **Ms. Alhaiki** (Bahrain) said that her country was committed to eradicating poverty through capacity-building, especially for women to enable them to participate in the decision-making process and gain access to employment and economic opportunities. There had already been remarkable progress in reducing poverty and the Prime Minister had received a UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour award for his efforts to raise the living standards of all Bahrainis. The Government would continue upgrading standards of living, focusing on housing, health and educational services.

45. Bahrain was advancing well towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Its main priorities were to combat poverty, improve living standards and

carry out educational reforms. It had already met the target of 100 per cent enrolment in primary school and was on track to meet the 2015 target of reducing child and maternal mortality. A national education reform project, involving ministries, key public and private partners and civil society would sustain economic growth and raise standards of living. Educational reforms were being carried out at all levels in an effort to enhance the labour force and support the economy.

46. Empowering women, notably through access to decision-making positions, participation in public affairs, elevation of their social and economic status and improvement of their health and educational opportunities, was instrumental to achieving development goals. In Bahrain, Government and private institutions were encouraged to integrate gender aspects in their programmes and action plans. Political participation was one of the three indicators of progress towards achieving the third Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Following the 2006 elections in Bahrain, women's participation in Parliament had increased from 7.5 to 13.75 per cent. The efforts to raise women out of poverty included the provision of small grants for women to take their first steps in income-generating activities and small businesses. Further support was still needed in that area, including more information on such grants and how to obtain them. Another challenge was the lack of gender-sensitive national legislation and the absence of financial resources and sufficient expertise.

47. The Labour Fund had been established in an effort to strengthen the national economy, develop the private sector to make it an engine of growth, raise the efficiency and productivity of Bahraini workers and increase the participation of Bahraini women in the labour market. A new industrial strategy that would create over 30,000 jobs was to be implemented by 2015. An eighteen-month strategy had been announced to promote the manufacturing of car spare parts, computers, electronics and transportation equipment for export. The National Employment Project had decreased the level of unemployment by two thirds, benefiting over 15,000 Bahrainis by the time of its completion in June 2007.

48. Her country would continue its efforts to eradicate poverty, empower women and enhance training and education. All States should make those issues their highest priority for development.

49. **Mr. Teshome** (Ethiopia) said that, as in many developing countries, women in Ethiopia were often victims of violence and discrimination and bore the brunt of poverty. Violence and discrimination against women restricted economic growth and impoverished communities, thus causing further harm to society. His country's progressive federal system clearly recognized not only the rights of women but also their indispensable role in development, and the Government had been pursuing a number of gender policies, strategies and practical schemes so as to improve the economic, social and political situation of Ethiopian women. Measures to improve the situation of women included the adoption of a national women's affairs policy; establishment of an institutional government mechanism with a full ministerial portfolio and prerogatives to execute the nationwide policy and strategy on women; promotion of the election of women parliamentarians at both federal and regional levels; and support for the establishment of various types of women-focused civic and economic organizations throughout the country. Several other administrative and legislative measures had also been taken to address discrimination and to promote gender equality.

50. In the education sector, affirmative action and other measures had been taken to raise female enrolment at different levels. Primary school enrolment for girls had risen from 37.4 per cent in 1996 to 83.9 per cent in 2006 and the number of female students in technical and vocational schools had reached 51.1 per cent in 2005.

51. In the health sector, urgent attention had been given to many areas, including supporting women's reproductive health, reducing maternal mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and outlawing all forms of violence against women. As a result, the rate of new HIV infections in adults had declined since 1995. The measures taken included public awareness-raising and the provision of anti-retroviral drugs to mothers with HIV in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The number of births attended by skilled health professionals had increased from 3.5 per cent in 1991 to 16 per cent in 2006.

52. The Family Law and the Penal Code had been revised. Under the revised Penal Code, violent crimes against women such as rape and abduction could be punished by a term of imprisonment of up to 25 years. A person concluding marriage with a minor could be

punished by a term of imprisonment of from three to seven years. Trafficking in women was punishable by imprisonment of from 5 to 25 years. The new family law gave women equal rights in relation to inheritance, divorce and custody of children.

53. The five-year Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty for the period 2006-2010 was harmonized with the Millennium Development Goals. Its primary objective was to lay a strong foundation for their implementation through accelerated sustainable economic development. The development plan included provisions for creating an atmosphere conducive to the maximum utilization of Ethiopian women's potential. It also addressed the gender dimension of poverty through measures to narrow the development gap between men and women and to facilitate women's participation in the political, economic and social spheres.

54. Poverty and backwardness continued to hamper further development. There was a lack of sufficient human resources, an absence of adequate awareness of the negative impact of harmful traditional practices and a lack of capacity and resources to implement laws and of effective monitoring mechanisms to assess the progress achieved. His Government therefore called on the international community to increase its financial and technical support for the efforts being made.

55. **Mr. Ben-Shaban** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that poverty was multidimensional and a form of marginalization that directly threatened the political, economic and social rights of the poor, as evidenced by the numerous instances in which their election votes were bought and sold. Many countries now had the benefit of unprecedented wealth, yet over 800 million people worldwide continued to endure hunger, deprivation and social alienation. High priority was given to poverty reduction efforts within the United Nations framework and by national Governments, but the outcome remained less than inspiring. More disturbing still was the fact that Africa's sub-Saharan countries remained the most impoverished, which undoubtedly constituted one of the biggest challenges to their achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations should therefore play a decisive role in encouraging international financial institutions and organizations, as well as donors, to promote policies and programmes aimed at poverty eradication. In that context, however, not only had ODA fallen in 2006 but many developed countries had failed to meet the ODA target set for developing and least developed countries, which additionally had external debt problems that had not yet been comprehensively addressed.

56. Other activities to be encouraged for the benefit of the poor included microcredit, microfinance and job creation, particularly in the agricultural sector. More concerted international efforts were also needed to combat AIDS, which had a significant impact on the workforce and its productivity, notably in Africa. The United Nations, civil society and non-governmental organizations could enhance their contribution to poverty reduction efforts by supporting the job creation policies of developing countries. Equally important was an effective international response in the event of any natural disaster occurring in those countries, which lacked the resources to cope with the economic, social and humanitarian repercussions, with the result that poverty was ultimately exacerbated. Genuine political will, however, was a prerequisite for poverty reduction, as was the implementation of all United Nations recommendations and resolutions on the subject.

57. His country's commitment to international anti-poverty efforts included its proposed strategic project for African children, women and youth. In cooperation with Nigeria and Cuba, his country was also financing a South-South health-care programme for African countries lacking health services. With a view to the economic integration of those countries, it was moreover seeking joint investment in agricultural projects designed to ensure food security for the disadvantaged. In that connection, various meetings for African officials had produced important recommendations for minimizing the difficulties faced by the agriculture and water sector, which was the prime food source for the peoples of the region. His country had also been actively involved in the establishment and funding of financial institutions for the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States and sought to encourage Libyan investors to increase their productive investment in African countries.

58. **Ms. Makhumula** (Malawi) said the world's least developed countries, including her own, suffered from extreme poverty, structural weaknesses in their economies and a lack of capacities for growth and development, often compounded by geographical handicaps. Those problems were exacerbated by limited human, institutional and productive capacity; acute susceptibility to external economic shocks;

natural and man-made disasters and communicable diseases; the effects of climate change; limited access to education, health and other social services, and to natural resources; poor infrastructure and lack of access to information and communication technologies. Yet international support for the least developed countries to overcome those constraints remained grossly inadequate.

59. The internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, offered hope that, in partnership with the international community, Malawi could still achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The objective was to transform Malawi from a predominantly importing and consuming economy to a predominantly manufacturing and exporting economy. A sound system of economic governance had therefore been established, including mechanisms for fighting corruption, reforming the public and private sectors; safeguarding and promoting human rights and the rule of law; increasing social protection for vulnerable groups; and establishing infrastructure for development. Priority was given to the cross-cutting issues of research, science and technology, gender empowerment and mainstreaming, and environmental protection. Malawi's limited financial and human resources prevented it from achieving all its development aspirations. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy therefore identified six main priorities: agricultural development and food security; irrigation and water development; transport and communication infrastructure development; energy and power; integrated rural development; and management and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

60. Malawi had made considerable progress in reducing poverty, and increasing food production, some of which had been exported to other countries in Southern Africa. The rate of infant mortality had been reduced, bed nets had been distributed to prevent and control malaria and access to anti-retroviral drugs had been increased. Efforts were also being made to reduce the maternal mortality rate, which remained high.

61. She called on all development partners to fulfil their commitments to assist the development efforts of Malawi and welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendation that the international community should continue to assist developing countries in their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, especially in relation to poverty eradication and the promotion of gender equality and empowerment.

62. Most of the women of Malawi lived in rural areas and did 70 per cent of all agricultural work, producing 80 per cent of food for home consumption. The empowerment of women, particularly rural women, was therefore an important element of the poverty reduction strategy. The Government was strengthening credit mechanisms to enable women to improve both on-farm and off-farm activities. Attention was focused on their access to land, extension services and farm inputs. Credit was made available to foster rural development. Improvement of the education and health of mothers was an essential component of long-term poverty reduction. Education remained the key for women's empowerment and their increased participation in decision-making; also needed was a change in social attitudes towards cultural beliefs that impeded development and perpetuated women's subordinate position in society. The Government continued to implement programmes to ensure equal access of girls and young women to all levels of education.

63. In conclusion, she stressed the need for increased participation of the international community to support projects in developing countries for the eradication of poverty and attainment of other development goals. In particular, the international community should fulfil its commitment to increase current levels of ODA and facilitate access by the least developed countries to markets for their products to enable them to benefit from international trade. While ODA was still a significant component of development, aid for trade was the most effective and sustainable way to eradicate poverty in the least developed countries.

64. **Ms. Seo** Eun-ji (Republic of Korea) said that it was essential to assess the progress made in implementing the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty from 1997 to 2006. While there had been progress in some parts of the world, the number of people currently living in extreme poverty was estimated to be over 800 million and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa were not on track to achieve the poverty target of the Millennium Development Goals.

65. Poverty persisted because of the lag in employment creation, unequal access to development benefits and financial resources and lack of good governance. Reducing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa

was even more complex and should receive more attention. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, continued to experience major challenges. The increasing spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, ill-designed macroeconomic reform programmes and persistent debt remained the key challenges to eradicating poverty in that region. Her Government intended to fulfil the pledges it had made at the 2005 World Summit and would double ODA from its current level by 2009, and triple it to around $3.2 billion by 2015. It had also joined the air-ticket solidarity contribution initiative, designed to eradicate poverty and disease in developing countries. Her country's Initiative for Africa's Development was currently on track. By 2008, the Republic of Korea would triple the overall amount of ODA to Africa and it was also participating in the Millennium Village project with Madagascar and in a joint trade-capacity-building programme in partnership with UNDP. It was also assisting developing countries in their capacity-building for trade by increasing benefits through non-tariff and other trade-related technical assistance.

66. Her country would share its own experience with developing countries by offering methods to overcome poverty and underdevelopment within a short period. In the four decades since the Korean War, it had transformed itself from a recipient country into a newly emerging donor country. It had devised its own national development strategy, including capacity-building for trade and human resources development. The Korea International Cooperation Agency, a government-affiliated organization for delivering grant aid, was expanding its training programmes for developing countries. Her country was also making strenuous efforts to bolster global partnerships with donor countries, international organizations and NGOs, as well as with recipient countries, in order to fight poverty. Such partnerships should contribute to the effectiveness of aid support and the establishment of sound development policies and good governance in the recipient countries.

67. The equal participation of women was essential in development strategies to eradicate poverty. Women and girls were the most vulnerable to political, economic and social change, and the gender perspective had to be a central pillar of policymaking. Poverty and hunger were often the cause of national unrest, which affected international peace and security. They also affected and were affected by climate change, environmental degradation, geo-political conflict and even arms proliferation. The international community should therefore increase its efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger. Her Government reaffirmed its commitment to continue to fight poverty at the national and international levels.

68. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that global and country-level assessments should assess progress towards the goal of halving poverty by 2015, identify constraints and recommend targeted measures tailored to individual situations. His delegation therefore welcomed the idea advanced by the President of the General Assembly concerning a summit of leaders to discuss the Millennium Development Goals.

69. Because of the multidimensional nature of its causes and effects, poverty had to be placed in a global context and addressed in an integrated manner. Poverty was not inevitable but was the result of uneven and unevenly paced economic development. Because poverty was a handicap for development and a threat to security, cooperation and support from all quarters were needed, including the multilateral trading system, official development assistance, debt relief and technology transfer. Effective participation by developing countries in making major economic decisions and assessing their outcome was also essential.

70. For many countries, particularly those in Africa, which were clearly not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, significant and predictable international support would be needed in a variety of areas. Tunisia therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's establishment of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group. The elimination of poverty, an implicit objective of the Charter of the United Nations, had been embraced as a goal by an ever growing global alliance, but that collective consensus must be given concrete expression in a true global partnership for development. Such concrete expression could be found, for example, in the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution establishing the World Solidarity Fund, pursuant to the initiative of Tunisia. He called for the necessary procedural steps to be taken without delay to make the Fund operational.

71. In his report on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (A/62/267), while some of his findings had been tempered, the Secretary-General had concluded that the

Decade had created a momentum that should be maintained. The Tunisian delegation fully supported that recommendation and took the view that proclamation of a second decade would be amply justified, given that the first had not fully achieved the primary objective for which it had been established. The Secretary-General's report indicated that, if current trends were to continue, 800 million people would still be in the throes of extreme poverty by 2015. That number was a challenge to all.

72. **Ms. Karpińska** (Poland) said that, in supporting the statement made by the delegation of Portugal at the 23rd meeting on behalf of the European Union, her delegation wished to reiterate its understanding that any reference made to the sexual and reproductive rights of women did not constitute encouragement to the promotion of abortion.

73. **Ms. Capones** (Philippines) observed that the first of the Millennium Development Goals entailed halving poverty and hunger, in the case of the Philippines, from 45 3 per cent of the population in 1991 to 22.7 per cent by 2015. The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger was the basic objective of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010, which affirmed the Government's commitment to policy and institutional changes aimed at pro-poor sustained economic growth. The Millennium Development Goals provided the framework for formulating the Plan's social commitments and identifying programmes and projects for investment. In order to generate jobs and reduce poverty, the Government was giving priority to agribusiness and upland development, infrastructure spending, microeconomic reforms, hunger mitigation and social development.

74. The Government's Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Programme addressed both supply and demand, by improving agricultural productivity and food delivery mechanisms and by increasing people's purchasing power, notably through the use of productivity-enhancing technology on the farms. Skills training programmes, especially for the poor and marginalized, were being enhanced and expanded. An expanded community-based monitoring system assessed the prevalence of poverty and hunger.

75. A programme to encourage birth spacing and promote smaller family size was being implemented at the local level. The Government continued to ensure the gender-responsiveness of its development programmes, and was working towards achieving gender equality and empowering women as part of poverty reduction efforts. Microfinance had been expanded and infused with more capital.

76. Beyond national reforms, there was a need to think and act internationally as a community of nations and to take affirmative action, especially in mobilizing the resources to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Thus the Philippines reiterated its call to consider its proposal for debt-for-equity in Millennium Development Goals projects. It called on the United Nations to spearhead an international campaign to change the concept of debt sustainability from "capacity to pay" to "level of debt that allow developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals", under which debt payments would not constitute hindrances to the attainment of the Goals.

77. The Philippines had good prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It was on track to attain five out of the eight goals, specifically those which related to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; reducing child mortality; combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and access to safe drinking water and sanitary toilet facilities. However, greater efforts would be needed to reach those relating to universal primary education, improved maternal health, and greater access to reproductive health services. Finally, the Philippines was still confronted with wide regional disparities in the progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals, and needed to make efforts to narrow the gaps.

78. **Mr. Dhungana** (Nepal) observed that widespread poverty, especially in the developing countries, continued to undermine global efforts for socio-economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty encompassed economic, social and human aspects and demanded a combined effort — locally, nationally, regionally and internationally — with effective mobilization of all stakeholders. The first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty had highlighted the importance of national efforts in addressing the root causes of poverty. Another such decade, covering the years 2008 to 2017, would be an opportunity for generating an even more sustained focus on the part of the international community.

79. Poverty eradication was the main objective of Nepal's medium-term development plan for the years

2007 to 2010. The plan had the target of reducing the proportion of people below the poverty line from 31 to 24 per cent. Nepal was concentrating on reducing unemployment and establishing sustainable peace through rural infrastructure reconstruction, promotion of information and communication technologies and quality education.

80. At the approach of the halfway point to the deadline for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, much remained to be done to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Consequently, the review in 2008 should be used as an opportunity to accelerate progress. For the least developed countries, the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action was of crucial importance in that regard.

81. A people-centred policy framework was essential if people were to be empowered to take the lead in development activities. Additionally, poverty eradication required massive investment in education and productive capacity. Empowerment of women was critical for broad-based and people-centred development. Sustainable and inclusive development would not be possible without investment in women and girls, which would have a multiplier effect for socio-economic transformation.

82. Nepal was committed to implementing the Millennium Development Goals, and to engaging all stakeholders in that effort. The issue of social exclusion had been addressed by fostering a culture of dialogue and inclusiveness in the formulation of development policies and implementation of the development programme. A community-led development approach had been emphasized, with the effective participation of women and of local and marginalized communities. Nepal looked forward to an enhanced level of cooperation from its development partners to bolster attainment of the country's needs-based and people-centred national priorities for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

83. **Mr. Tarrago** (Brazil) said that all the items on the agenda of the Second Committee converged on the challenge of poverty eradication. That challenge demanded action. That was why Brazil had taken the lead in launching in September 2004, the Action against Hunger and Poverty. That initiative had prompted a number of concrete measures, including innovative financing mechanisms that currently funded UNITAID. It had also raised awareness about the cross-cutting nature of the fight against poverty. In that context, he reiterated Brazil's support to the initiative led by Guatemala, "Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger", with a target date of 2015. Joint efforts were needed to beat poverty and hunger: no country could do so alone.

84. Economic growth alone could not lift families above the poverty line. It had to be supported by public policies to address the structural obstacles to improving the living standards of the poor. In that context, the expression "middle-income countries" could be misleading, as average income levels did not reflect the wide income disparities in those countries or the pockets of poverty that, in the middle-income countries, harboured 70 per cent of the poor.

85. In Brazil, retooled social policies had improved income distribution and reduced extreme poverty at the second-highest rate in the region. That had been achieved with an average growth rate of 4 to 5 per cent a year, whereas attaining the same results without any correction of income inequality would have required a growth of 6 per cent a year.

86. That success was the result of several factors, the most important of which included development of a more effective social protection network, greater integration of local labour markets, and improvements in education. Public policies also played a critical role. Between 2001 and 2005, 42 per cent of the improvement in income distribution had resulted from income transfer programmes, including one which granted monthly allowances to 11 million families who met certain requirements related to school attendance, vaccination and maternal health.

87. Expanding access to education had a major impact on income inequality, and Brazil had succeeded in enrolling almost 100 per cent of children under 10 years of age in primary school. The challenge now was to improve the quality of education in the upper grades. Quality education involved bringing technological innovation into the schoolroom and to low-income families, ensuring their social inclusion. To that end, and with a view to shrinking the digital divide, Brazil had made access to the Internet available to more than 5 million low-income people in 2,500 cities.

88. **Ms. Rodríguez de Ortíz** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the eradication of poverty and the fight against its causes were at the heart of her country's National Development Plan. The rise in

poverty before the Bolivarian revolution had been the result of the capitalist development model that had prevailed for more than 40 years.

89. A new type of development model was urgently needed, which made human beings the focus of action, guaranteed the right to development and was rooted in the values of solidarity, justice, social inclusion, respect for human rights and citizen participation. Building a society free of the scourge of poverty also required full participation by the community in decisions about its own development.

90. The progress achieved through its social programmes, particularly in combating poverty, would enable Venezuela to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015. Unlike agencies such as the World Bank, which conceived of poverty in simple monetary terms, her Government viewed it as a multifaceted phenomenon, and was therefore tackling it through a multidimensional approach. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, convinced that South-South cooperation was an important means of advancing social and economic development, was working with its neighbours in Latin America to foster the development of their respective peoples, pursuing development policies based on sovereign use and control of natural resources and respect for the environment, with a view to achieving the eradication of poverty, exclusion and inequality.

91. Her delegation joined others in calling for the proclamation of a second United Nations decade for the eradication of poverty, which should go hand in hand with the development of mechanisms for mobilizing financing for development from a variety of sources, including domestic financing, foreign investment, official development assistance, debt relief and a multilateral trading system that was fair, well-regulated, predictable and non-discriminatory.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.